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Director

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
Department of Health Services



GRAY DAVIS
Governor

October 18, 2002

TO: All County Welfare Directors
All County Administrative Officers
All County Medi-Cal Program Specialists/Liaisons
All County Mental Health Directors
All County Health Executives
All County MEDS Liaisons

Letter No.:02-49

HEALTH CARE OPTIONS (HCO) PRESENTATIONS

Ref.: All County Welfare Directors Letter (ACWDL) No. 01-06

The purpose of this ACWDL is to provide further clarification and implementation instructions regarding the requirement for each applicant or beneficiary to attend an Health Care Options (HCO) presentation.

Background Information

California established a method for informing Medi-Cal beneficiaries of the options for receiving Medi-Cal benefits in areas where Medi-Cal managed care plans are operating. This process for informing is referred to as the HCO program. Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 14016.5(a), states: "... each applicant or beneficiary shall personally attend a presentation at which the applicant or beneficiary is informed of the managed care and fee-for-service options available regarding methods of receiving Medi-Cal benefits. The county shall ensure that each beneficiary or applicant attends this presentation."

Implementation Instructions

Beneficiaries receiving Medi-Cal benefits under the mandatory managed care enrollment aid codes receive an HCO informing packet. The packet contains enrollment and health plan information, including a list of scheduled presentations. In addition to the package mailed by the HCO program, the County is responsible for referring each applicant or beneficiary in mandatory aid codes to an HCO presentation for additional instruction regarding managed care health plans that are available. It is the County's responsibility to take an active role in encouraging each applicant or beneficiary to make an informed health plan choice.



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Counties must insure that existing referral requirements are met. For example, in Los Angeles County (a county with on-site HCO presentations), eligibility workers (EW) currently use an HCO Presentation Referral Form. Their process includes the following:

1. The EW completes the form and obtains the signature of the applicant or beneficiary who will receive an HCO presentation.
2. The EW places the completed form in a specific area, usually in a box outside the presentation room, for the HCO Enrollment Services Representative (ESR).
3. The ESR obtains the form, calls the name of the applicant or beneficiary, who is waiting in the reception area, and provides a presentation in the designated presentation room. Depending on the HCO space provided, group presentations are also provided.

Beneficiaries who do not choose a health plan within the specified timeframe will be assigned a health plan. It is the intent of the program to assist beneficiaries in making an informed choice so that infrequent assignments occur. The toll-free number of the California Health Care Options Program is 1-800-430-4263 and is available to beneficiaries and County staff for assistance with enrollment procedures and information.

If you have any questions regarding this ACWDL, please contact Mr. Curtis Lang of HCO at (916) 464-5750.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY

Beth Fife, Chief
Medi-Cal Eligibility Branch